

## 8. THE SIEIDI LIFE CYCLE FROM PAST TO PRESENT

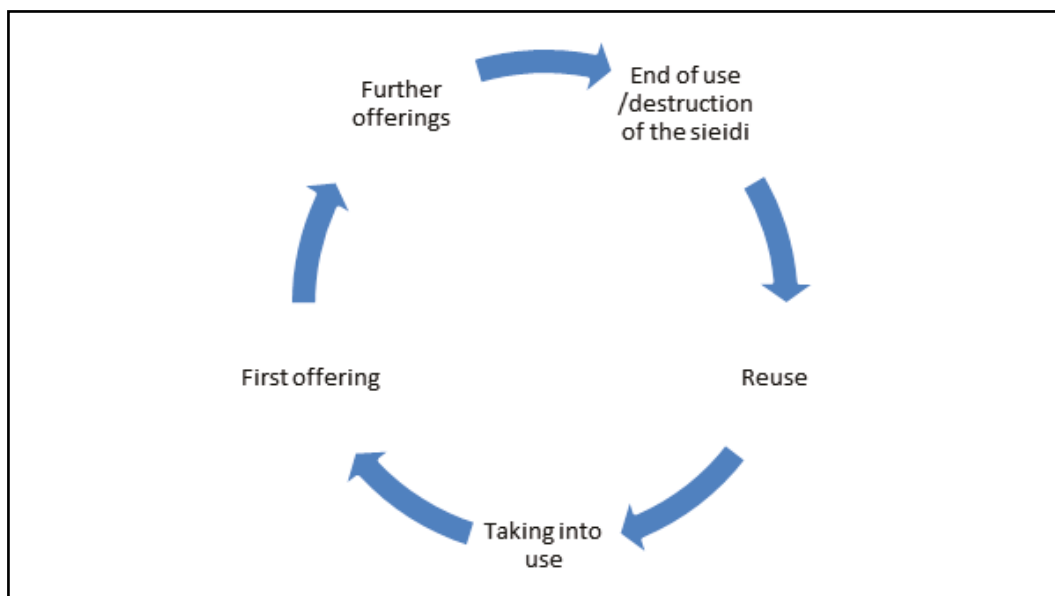
*Lake Äkässaivo (80), Muonio, September 2010*

*Lake Äkässaivo in Muonio is a sáiva lake and thus a sacred lake for the Sámi. Also, Samuli Paulaharju writes that the steep rocky shores of the lake were considered significant.<sup>757</sup> Since then, meanings associated with sacredness have also been attributed to the large bedrock formation standing about 10 metres from the shore and named Seitapahta in the guide boards erected at the site. However, written sources make no mention of offerings being connected specifically with this place, and excavations did not reveal animal bones remaining from offering activities at the foot of the stone. However, the impressive appearance of the rock formation has caused people to connect it to sieidis, and this impression is reinforced by guide boards that provide information on sieidis as a part of Sámi beliefs. In connection with archaeological studies, we noticed that people visiting the site left some signs of their visits. At the foot of the rock formation, a feather, some snuff, a slice of reindeer meat, and a religious tract were placed in a hollow in the rock. These objects indicate that the meanings formerly attributed to ancient sacred places have been transferred to a place that has been taken into use fairly recently. The snuff and reindeer meat continue an old tradition of offerings, the feather might be related to neo-pagan traditions, and the tract implies attempts to Christianize the place, thought to be a sieidi of the ethnic religion. This place with a fairly recent origin has thus acquired old meanings.*

<sup>757</sup> Paulaharju 1962 [1922], 169.

## 8.1. The birth of a sacred place: what turns a stone into a sieidi

In the foregone, I have presented some features of the use of Sámi sacred places and especially sieidis since the early 11th century and up to recent times. The life cycles of sacred places are characterized especially by the long period of their use, the extensive geographical area in which they are found, the presence of both material and symbolic aspects, and the variety of people visiting the place. The term *life cycle* describes the changes that take place in a person, object, or place with the passage of time. These changes are related to each other and create meanings. Through social interaction, the meanings of objects and places change during their life cycles.<sup>758</sup> The phases of the life cycle of sacred place are, in a simplified form, origin, use, end of use, and reuse. Here, I concentrate especially on the life cycle of sieidis, which were typically used for making offerings (Figure 96). The use can, however, have several phases, and reuse can either precede the end of use or activate a sacred place back into use even after a long unused period. Not all phases in the life cycle of a sacred place leave signs in the material culture.



**Figure 96.** The life cycle of a sieidi.

Of all sacred places, especially the origin or introduction of sieidis is closely connected to the beginning of offering activities. However, we cannot always speak of the “first fish or piece of meat” taken to the sieidi. Instead, the sieidi has acquired its meaning during a longer period of time. There are many stories associated with the birth of a sacred place. Others emphasize the creation of the sacred place regardless of humans, whereas according to others, it was specifically action by humans that made the place sacred. According to Johannes Schefferus, the *storjunkare* himself shows his preference for a certain place by haunting it, which makes the place sacred.<sup>759</sup> The commonest story related to the birth of sieidis tells of a person turned

<sup>758</sup> Gosden & Marshall 1999: 160–170.

<sup>759</sup> Schefferus 1963 [1673], 164.

into a stone. A. Andelin tells of a sieidi stone on the bank of the River Utsjoki that was born when a witch's helper, in spite of being forbidden, spoke during the casting of a spell and turned into stone.<sup>760</sup> Sometimes also the enemy could turn to stone.<sup>761</sup> In these cases, the mythical origin of the stone influenced people's experiences of the stone as a sieidi. On the other hand, stories of a mythical origin could be associated with certain stones only after they had already been used as sieidis. In these cases, experiencing the stone as a sieidi caused the mythical origin and not vice versa.<sup>762</sup>

Sometimes people started to respect a stone as a sieidi after it had shown its power. J. A. Friis writes that the Sámi considered sacred a place where they had had success hunting or fishing.<sup>763</sup> Sometimes a sieidi could turn into a sieidi only after proving its efficacy, for example, by giving wild reindeer.<sup>764</sup> T. I. Itkonen writes that the true nature of a sieidi could be discovered by sleeping next to the stone.<sup>765</sup>

Other stories emphasize the fact that people chose their own sieidis. The stone as such was not sacred or special, but was considered as an offering stone only after the first offerings were made. According to Fellman, a stone was not considered suitable for worshipping until it had been brushed with reindeer blood or animal fat.<sup>766</sup> When people came to a new hunting place, they chose a sieidi stone there. Itkonen states that when the Sámi came "to the shore of a lake where they had not yet fished, they chose as a fish sieidi a large stone in an island or in the water near the shore."<sup>767</sup>

Itkonen's description indicates that, in spite of the fact that people chose their own sieidis, the choice was influenced by presumptions of what kind of stone made a sieidi. In Chapter 4, I explained what kinds of landscape elements are typical for the topography of sacred places and what landscape elements sacred places themselves represent. Typical features for the locations of sacred places are high places, such as fells and hills, as well as waterways, such as lakes and rivers with their related headlands and islands. However, a location that seems uniform in relation to landscape elements does differ between individual sites. A sacred place may be located on the top or slope of a fell or hill, and the elevation may vary from ridges of a few metres' height up to the fell of Halti with an elevation of 1,365 metres. Likewise, waterways vary greatly in size, and a sacred place may be located either in the water or farther away from the shore.

There are no great regional differences in what kinds of landscape elements are associated with sacred places in different regions of Finnish Lapland. However, headlands are somewhat emphasized as landscape elements in Western Lapland. The topography of the landscape naturally determines what kinds of places are even available for sacred places to be located in. For example, sacred fells are located mainly in the areas of Utsjoki and Enontekiö. The comparison between the areas of

<sup>760</sup> Andelin 1859, 274.

<sup>761</sup> Itkonen 1962, 128; Manyuhin 1996, 72.

<sup>762</sup> Cf. Itkonen 1962, 128–129.

<sup>763</sup> Friis 1977 [1871], 134.

<sup>764</sup> SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 1–107.1959.

<sup>765</sup> Itkonen 1948 II, 310.

<sup>766</sup> Fellman 1906 II, 18.

<sup>767</sup> Itkonen 1948 II, 313. Original Finnish text: "pyytämättömän järven rannalle, valittiin kalaseidaksi iso, saarella tai lähellä rantaa vedessä oleva kivi."

Utsjoki and Inari showed that people had found sacredness in landscape features typical of the area in question: rivers and fells in Utsjoki, the surroundings of lakes in Inari. The attempt to compare sacred places related to various deities or used by different groups is made problematic by the limited research material. However, the most common landscape elements would seem to be the same ones that also dominate the overall picture.

Atypical shape and visibility or an unusual surface, colour, or size have been considered as characteristic features for sacred places and especially sieidis as landscape elements. For the inspected sites, the most common features were unusual shape and size. Such definitions based on external characteristics are, of course, highly subjective; a stone that one person sees as a "Lapp hut" may in another person's eyes stand out only slightly from the surrounding terrain. On the other hand, unusually shaped stones can acquire meanings in the long term. For example, interviewees in the 1960s and 1970s paid attention to the same characteristic features of the sieidi at Sieiddakeäldgi (113) as Paulaharju did: the hollow in the side of the stone and the round holes inside the stone.<sup>768</sup> Some of them may, of course, have been familiar with Paulaharju's description. Atypical shape is also connected to anthropomorphic features, which cannot be considered as a determining factor for a sieidi, but which have nevertheless been associated with special meanings.

The visibility of a sieidi is affected by the topography of the location, the size of the sieidi, the vegetation, and any other nearby stones, among other factors. The sieidi is highly visible in the landscape at less than half of the inspected sites. However, the season of the year plays a large role in visibility; the leaves of trees may obscure the view even at a close distance. In addition, in some cases, the location of the sieidi, such as a headland jutting out into the lake, may be visible from afar even if the stone itself is not. In these cases, people's preliminary knowledge may affect the meanings of sacredness attributed to what they see. There are no unifying features for the direction from which the sieidi is visible. However, visibility or the direction from which the sieidi's shape is seen as atypical may have had an effect on how the sieidi was approached.

The sacred can thus manifest itself in the landscape in many ways. Even though waterways and high places are typical landscape elements associated with sacredness, there are differences in the sizes of these landscape elements and in the location of the sacred place in relation to the shoreline or slope. Additionally, the sieidi stones themselves may have varied greatly from large bedrock formations to small stones that hardly stand out from the surrounding stones. The stone was not necessarily always special, but instead sacredness may have been associated with incidental phenomena. The sacred may have acquired many multisensory meanings in the landscape. It may have been associated with the sound of water or a fell that dominates the view over a large area. The sacred may also have been associated with the sense of touch, as people touched the stone's grooved surface. A sacred place may have been chosen for symbolic and experience-related reasons, but it could equally well be chosen for functional, subsistence-related reasons.

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<sup>768</sup> Paulaharju 1932, 31; Mattila 1974, 64–65 referring to TKU 67/59 N:11, 67/76 a:2, 67/266:39, 70/7:24, 70/43:28.

## 8.2. The use of a sacred place: rituals and subsistence

Fishing, hunting, and reindeer husbandry are considered to have been closely connected to ritual activity in sacred places. In written sources, especially in descriptions of offerings brought to sieidis, the species thought to be central to the Sámi means of subsistence stand out: fish plus wild and domesticated reindeer. Archaeological studies, however, provide a slightly different picture. The number of fish offerings remains scanty, probably partly due to excavation technique and taphonomic reasons. The bone material contains species that are rarely mentioned in written sources, such as bear and sheep, as well as capercaillie, swan, and other birds. When ethnographic material was collected, the so-called typical Sámi means of subsistence may have been generalized in the descriptions of sieidi offerings.

Written sources also pay attention to the differences between sieidis for wild and domesticated reindeer and for fish, even though some sieidis are also mentioned as having been good for everything. Of the excavated sieidis, only Sieddakeäldgi in Utsjoki seems to have been specialized in terms of offerings. Only reindeer bones were identified there. At all the other inspected sieidis that provided old datings, at least two species were found.

In terms of related landscape elements, sieidis associated with different means of subsistence cannot be grouped neatly. Fish sieidis are often, but not always, located close to water. The waterway was usually a river in Utsjoki and a lake in Inari, corresponding to the topography of the area. For other means of subsistence, the link between them and the location in the landscape is less clear. Wild reindeer sieidis can be associated with *any* landscape element. For domesticated reindeer sieidis, the situation is twofold: sieidis to which only domesticated reindeer are said to have been offered are mostly located on fells or in other high places, whereas sieidis to which several species have been offered are distributed more evenly among different landscape types. This indicates that the former have been chosen specifically with a connection to reindeer husbandry, whereas the latter represent sieidis whose meaning has changed over the times.

Sacred places have been a part of the taskscape that has also contained meanings other than ritual activities. Even though hunting pits near sacred places do not unquestionably prove the connection between hunting and offering activities, they are an example of a landscape that has been the stage of many activities. Hunting pits and rectangular fireplaces testify to a landscape that has been used for hunting trips over a long time. Hunting-related sieidis may have given new meanings to a landscape that has been associated with hunting for generations. The landscapes of reindeer husbandry have also been linked with experiences of the sacred. Sacred places were located along migration routes and thus became a part of the annual cycle. They gave a sense of continuity and connection to different parts of the migration routes as people stopped at the same places year after year. It is also said that people camped near sieidis during migrations.

Additionally, more permanent settlement took place in the vicinity of sacred places. Many sacred places were associated with rules that forbade everyday activities near the sacred place. Like other rules, this prohibition cannot be considered as applicable over the whole Sámi area or at all times. Camping at sieidis along migration routes

provides one example of the connection between settlement and sacred places. There were also homesteads and *goahtis* near sacred places. Fish sieidis in particular were located close to settlement, and offerings were also given at settlement sites. The Sámi lived in a landscape that they associated with many varying meanings.

The bone material found at settlement sites also testifies to the connection between means of subsistence and offerings. The animals that were most frequently offered to sieidis are also found in the bone material from settlement sites. The bear found at the Näkkälä sieidi has not been found at settlement sites, and other species that are not known from offering places have been found in connection with settlement, such as cattle, beaver, hare, and wolf. This seems to indicate that some animals had more symbolic significance than others.

The spatial connection between sacred places and signs of human activity indicates that the sacredness of the landscape did not rule out activities related to means of subsistence and making a living from the landscape. Sacredness did not mean that other activities were prohibited. Various means of subsistence were practised near sacred places, for example, meat was stored in storage pits in boulder fields (*purnu*) near Tihkkesohkka in Enontekiö,<sup>769</sup> and there were bird nesting trees and signs of fishing on the island of Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi, as well as hunting or storage pits on the headland of Porviniemi in Muonio. Sometimes an animal shot near the sieidi was considered as a gift from the sieidi, and hunting near the sieidi was thus not disapproved of.<sup>770</sup> Sacred places may have been usage areas in which means of subsistence were practised much like elsewhere but that may have been associated with more controlled behaviour and restrictions. Sometimes, however, the near vicinity of the sacred place has been viewed as protected from everyday activities. For example, it is said that one should not eat blueberries growing near the Näkkälä sieidi.<sup>771</sup>

The effect of sacredness cannot thus be restricted to a certain way of acting. Sacredness was not always a restricting factor for action, and at the same time, sacredness was not restricted to offering places and sieidis. Activities other than offering could also be perceived as ritual and associated with contacting the spirits. For example, hunting in itself has been viewed as a ritual activity. Hunters were in contact not only with animals but also with the spirit world, and the difference between these two could be wavering. There were also rituals and rules related to the handling of the catch.<sup>772</sup> For example, handling meat could be forbidden to women in some cases.<sup>773</sup> Beliefs were associated with hunting and fishing, but also with, for example, haymaking.<sup>774</sup> It is mentioned that in Ullatti in Sweden, there was an offering stone related to cattle husbandry on which one had to pour a drop of milk every time a cow was milked.<sup>775</sup>

<sup>769</sup> SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 509.1961.

<sup>770</sup> Lounema 2003, 158 quoting Nils-Piera Labba.

<sup>771</sup> SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 1–107.1959.

<sup>772</sup> Schanche 2000, 237–238; Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2006, 56.

<sup>773</sup> Ervasti 1956 [1737], 13–14.

<sup>774</sup> Paulaharju 1914, 24.

<sup>775</sup> Paulaharju 1961 [1937], 181.

The taskscape can be viewed as being full of religious meaning. Subsistence, ritual, and social contact interacted with each other. Making a living was not divorced from myths, religion, and cosmology. Rituals were linked to subsistence through rules and beliefs related to hunting, for example, and through interaction with spirits that affected animals. Sieidis and spirits, not just other people, belonged within the sphere of other social interaction.

Sacredness can be seen as manifesting itself especially in sacred nodes of the landscape, sacred places in which contacts between the worlds were set in place in advance. The boundary between sacred and profane places or activities was not rigid, however. The sacred could manifest itself in connection with certain places or rituals, but it could also be a part of life in a more comprehensive sense.<sup>776</sup> Many activities considered as profane from a Western viewpoint, such as hunting and fishing, had ritual implications. Thus, the sacred and the profane were linked in human life, and people did not necessarily experience a transition from profane to ritual during their daily tasks. The significance of liminality as a part of experiencing the sacred should therefore also be re-examined. Sieidis are examples of liminal places that were at the same time located between the worlds yet not apart from this world. A connection to other worlds could be experienced everywhere and as a part of activities considered as profane, even though some places in the landscape were marked with sieidis due to their liminal nature. People lived in the sacred landscape, and their connection to the hereafter was interactive and manifested itself in many forms that were not restricted to the liminal places in the landscape.

### **8.3. The reuse of sacred places: changing meanings**

Datings from sites studied in the area of Finland indicate that the use of sieidis, or at least the making of offerings that left traces, started in the 11th and 12th centuries, or later than in Sweden, where metal artefacts were offered as early as the 8th century and especially in the 10th through 14th centuries. This period at the turn of the first millennium has also been significant in terms of other ritual activity. Known hoards of precious metals from Sweden are dated to 1000–1350 A.D.<sup>777</sup> and from Finland to 1050–1200 A.D. Especially in Northern Norway, at the Varanger fjord, the number of slate graves constructed since the early years A.D. increases and their area of distribution expands in the 11th through 14th centuries.<sup>778</sup> Quite a bit of jewellery of eastern origin has been found in the slate graves dated to the 10th/11th through 13th/14th centuries.<sup>779</sup> Most of the bear graves are also dated to the 10th through 14th centuries.<sup>780</sup> No bear graves are known in Finland, but the bear bones found at the Näkkälä sieidi are dated to the 12th through 13th centuries, the peak period of bear graves in Sweden. Ritual activity at the turn of the millennium seems to have taken new forms that manifest themselves as the peak period of bear burials, an increase in the number of slate graves, and the introduction of precious

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<sup>776</sup> Sherratt 1991, 61.

<sup>777</sup> Hedman 2003, 25.

<sup>778</sup> Hansen & Olsen 2007, 83, 117, 122.

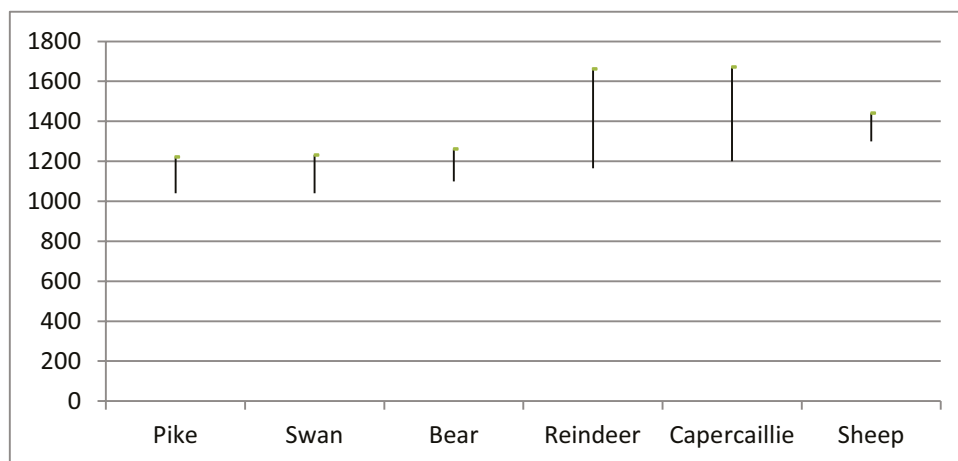
<sup>779</sup> Hansen & Olsen 2007, 118.

<sup>780</sup> Hansen & Olsen 2007, 130.

metal hoards and sieidi offerings. However, in the area of Finland, there are few signs of ritual activity with the exception of sieidis.

The same period at the turn of the Viking Age and the Early Middle Ages is also associated with other changes in the Sámi area. According to Halinen *et al.*, these changes are related to the warm period dated from 865 to 1260 A.D. This is also the peak period for rectangular fireplaces.<sup>781</sup> Changes also took place in the material culture, as eastern forms of artefacts increases in the 10th and 11th centuries.<sup>782</sup> This is thought to be related to increased trade.<sup>783</sup> An increase in fur trade is also seen as having affected ritual life, as it emphasized hunting rituals and men's roles and led to the exclusion of women from these rituals.<sup>784</sup>

A variety of offered species seems typical for the early phases of sieidi use (Figure 97). At the sites studied within this project, the oldest dating was for a fish bone from Taatsi dated to the 11th through 12th centuries. Also swan and bear bones are dated to the 11th through 13th centuries, and sheep offerings start in the 14th through 15th centuries. It thus seems that offering activities took many forms already in their earliest stages and were *not* tied to a certain means of subsistence.



**Figure 97.** Chart showing the datings of animal bone material from sieidis studied in Finland.

Dating offerings related to wild reindeer hunting and reindeer husbandry is complicated by the fact that the bones of wild and domesticated reindeer cannot be distinguished from each other by means of osteological analysis. Bones of both types have been offered during the longest time span, from the 12th through the 17th centuries. During this period, offering traditions may have changed and wild reindeer offerings related to hunting may have been replaced by offerings related to reindeer husbandry. With the exception of capercaillie, signs of other animal offerings disappear from the bone material during the 15th century. This may indicate the increased significance of wild or domesticated reindeer either in subsistence or beliefs or both. However, the lack of sheep and game birds, for example, in the offered species does not necessarily mean that they were no longer utilized for food.

<sup>781</sup> Halinen *et al.* 2013.

<sup>782</sup> Hansen & Olsen 2007, 75; Halinen *et al.* 2013.

<sup>783</sup> Hansen & Olsen 2007, 138.

<sup>784</sup> Schanche 2000, 324–325; Hansen & Olsen 2007, 126.



The meanings of animals related to subsistence and beliefs did not always go hand in hand. A change in subsistence did not always mean a dramatic change in offering activities. The offered species might change, but the offering places remained the same. Many sieidis are said to have been used for many kinds of offerings and claimed to have been good for everything.<sup>785</sup> No great differences can be observed in the locations of offering places between different means of subsistence. Offering places related to fishing are often located near water, but there are exceptions. In the study of offering places connected in written sources with reindeer husbandry, it could be seen that sites at which only domesticated reindeer was offered were more often located at high elevations, whereas sites used for offering many different species were located in more varying landscapes. These latter sites may represent the continued use of old sacred places. In fell terrain or other high places, on the other hand, people chose locations intended especially for use in connection with reindeer husbandry.

On the other hand, reindeer husbandry is considered to have become large-scale only in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the amount of bone material at sieidis decreases. Bones are found up to the middle of the 17th century, but there is no material dated to the 18th century. This corresponds to the situation in Sweden. Bear burials, too, which are not known in the area of Finland, end at the same time in Sweden. The 18th century thus saw a change in offering activities. Christian missionary work was at its most intensive in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the northernmost parts of Finland, Christian churches came to the sacred places of the Sámi ethnic religion. Offering activities related to the ethnic religion could, however, continue in secrecy and take new forms. Perhaps people moved away from known places to give private offerings within *goahtis* or in hidden locations.<sup>786</sup> Some of the offering tradition also moved to churches. The cohabiting of the ethnic religion and Christianity is also reflected in old blessings and prayers that address the deities of both religions.<sup>787</sup>

In more southern Lapland, Christianization took other forms. The locations of churches did not have a clear connection with the sacred places of the ethnic religion. This may indicate that the sacred places were no longer at least visibly in use and there was thus no need to Christianize them. This is also supported by the fact that no signs of offerings were found in the sacred places inspected in the area of Muonio. However, a lack of finds does not completely exclude the possibility of offerings. Offering activities may have taken other forms that are not visible in the material culture. Many sacred places in Muonio are also related to waterways (Figure 28), which may indicate that they were used as fish sieidis. In this case, offerings did not necessarily leave any archaeologically discernible traces. In more southern areas too, all the way down to Oulu, the habit of bringing offerings to church is known.

The 18th century did not mean an end to the use of sacred places of the ethnic religion. Starting from the 19th century, objects with connections to the old offering tradition have been brought to the same places. This is indicated by bottle glass dating to the mid-19th century and coins dating to the 19th through 21st centuries.

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<sup>785</sup> E.g. Paulaharju 1932.

<sup>786</sup> Halinen 2010, 54.

<sup>787</sup> Paulaharju 1963 [1923], 261.

Both alcohol and coins were also related to the offering tradition of the ethnic religion. However, offerings took on new forms. In the 20th century, neo-pagans also made offerings and tourist activities at sieidis resembled offering activities. Along with the times, sieidis have thus acquired new users who were not necessarily Sámi. There are examples of this already from earlier times. For example, G. A. Andersson writes that settlers used sieidis by bringing copper objects to Pyhänkivi.<sup>788</sup> Old offerings and new traditions could have cohabited at sieidis. At the rock formation at Lake Äkässaivo, reindeer heads have given way to packaged ham slices and tobacco has been replaced by a bundle of snuff.

The activity of the church at sieidis has also taken new forms. During the shared history of the church and ethnic religion, sieidis have been destroyed and the ethnic religion has been demonized, but churches have been built in old sacred places, offerings brought to churches, and clergymen have been interested in the ethnic religion and Sámi culture. Nowadays, the church has once again returned to the old sacred places. In Sweden, an hour of prayer was organized at a sieidi that was returned to its place<sup>789</sup>, and in Rovaniemi, local people have taken an old sacred place, Somosen kirkko [The church of Somonen], into use by the congregation and built a bell tower, altar, and benches there (Figure 98). This kind of activity can be seen as an attempt by the church to show respect towards the old sacred places<sup>790</sup> or as a new Christianization of the sacred places of the ethnic religion.



**Figure 98.** A Christian milieu at the sacred place of Somosen kirkko [The church of Somonen].

<sup>788</sup> Andersson 1914, 45.

<sup>789</sup> Bientie 2001.

<sup>790</sup> Bientie 2001.

The long chronological dimension and the change in meanings from the 11th century to today make it difficult to define a Sámi sacred place or sieidi. Already in early times, there have been both sacred places used by the whole community and those visited only by one family or one person. Some sieidis and sacred places have been used for centuries, others perhaps only for a person's lifetime. Thus, a stone can be a sieidi that has been used by only one person fairly recently. This is why my research includes sacred places whose location is based on information from only one informant. However, I have associated sieidis specifically with Sámi belief traditions. Of course, offering stones or otherwise significant stones may also exist elsewhere.

#### **8.4. The end of use: are they alive after all?**

Throughout the times, some Sámi sacred places have also seen their end. The most attention has probably been paid to sacred places destroyed by clerics and Christianized Sámi, but also among the ethnic religion, sieidis could be abandoned or even destroyed. The use of a sieidi was sometimes tied to a certain situation. For example, sieidis near a settlement site could be abandoned as people moved from one village to another. Sometimes a sieidi stone is used by a certain person, and as the offerer died, offerings also came to an end.<sup>791</sup> As offering activities ended, sieidis could also lose their powers.<sup>792</sup>

Destroying sieidis was not always easy. According to Fellman, they were destroyed by fire.<sup>793</sup> Paulaharju, too, writes that twigs were first burned under the sieidi and then water was poured over the hot stone to make it split into pieces. Sometimes sieidi stones were also rolled into a lake.<sup>794</sup>

Sieidis have thus been destroyed at different times and for different reasons. The destruction may have been related, for example, to the sieidi's failing to give what it had promised or to the influence of Christianity. Sometimes sieidis just fell out of use with no dramatic destruction process. Not all sieidis were destroyed, and sometimes even a destroyed sieidi may have acquired new meanings, like the god statue at Keivitsa. It was razed down to the ground, but even in recent years, new offerings have been brought to its location.

A place could retain the meaning of sacredness even if the sieidi that once stood there was destroyed or disappeared. Sacredness is born out of meanings that are attributed to a place by the community and individuals using it. The identity of a place is not permanent, but is redefined over and over again through the activities that take place there.<sup>795</sup> Meanings are created, born, and reborn in a continuous process, and the experience of sacredness is thus also not static.

Even today, sieidis and other Sámi sacred places are associated with many meanings and they are the theatres of many kinds of activities. For the Sámi, sacred places can

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<sup>791</sup> SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 1–107.1959.

<sup>792</sup> Högström 1980 [1746/1747], 183.

<sup>793</sup> Fellman 1906 II, 19–20.

<sup>794</sup> Paulaharju 1932, 24, 43–44.

<sup>795</sup> Edensor 2006, 200.

mean, for example, a cultural connection to their ancestors. Schefferus already noted that the custom of offering to sieidis has been preserved because people wanted to show respect by considering sacred that which their fathers had considered sacred.<sup>796</sup> Even this tradition may take new forms. Instead of borrowing old traditions, people can build new traditions on top of the old ones. The meaning attributed to a sacred place does not always have to be tied to offering. Even if offerings are no longer actively made to sieidis, they can still be respected and viewed as essential for constructing one's identity.

As two examples of the meanings that can be attributed to sacred places outside the Sámi community, I have presented the activities brought on by neo-paganism and tourism at sieidis. The reuse of sacred places may arouse strong emotions. The views of different parties on the meanings of these places and their appropriate use may be in conflict. In Britain, the activities of neo-pagans at megalithic sites has provoked discussion, because the general public sees offerings left at megaliths as garbage.<sup>797</sup> In Finland, signs of offerings by neo-pagans in various sacred places have not yet attracted a great deal of attention, and no discussion has been generated by them. What some people call ritual trash is to others a sign of sacred activities. According to Kathryn Rountree, rituals are to the neo-pagans not only religious activities but also a way of constructing their identities as pagans.<sup>798</sup> On the other hand, neo-paganism can be seen as a form of neocolonialism that is associated with stealing the traditions of aboriginal peoples.<sup>799</sup> The history of aboriginal peoples is invalidated by creating a picture of noble savages who are thought to be incapable of cherishing their own traditions.<sup>800</sup>

Also tourism as a part of the use of sacred places has been seen as problematic. According to Helena Ruotsala, the use of the Sámi culture in tourism is a sign of ethnographic exploitation.<sup>801</sup> In the words of Päivi Magga: "The Sámi would also like to have more tourism, but in the form of Sámi ecotourism that cooperates with reindeer herders and protects Sámi sacred places."<sup>802</sup> Tourism can be seen as secularizing and wearing out the sacred place, but it may also create new meanings and become a part of the life cycle of the sacred place.

The use of sacred places evokes strong feelings, leading to a desire to evaluate meanings associated with these places and deny the value of some meanings. A meaning considered as right may be seen as connected with the authenticity of the place. According to Siân Jones, authenticity is created as a result of action and encounters. Because some forms of action are considered as better or more right, and others are lost or discriminated against, the process of defining authenticity often causes disagreements.<sup>803</sup> By denying the value of the current meanings, sites may be protected not only from "outsiders" but also from local people and their

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<sup>796</sup> Schefferus 1963 [1673], 147.

<sup>797</sup> Wallis 2003, 170.

<sup>798</sup> Rountree 2006, 100, 104.

<sup>799</sup> Wallis 2003, xiii.

<sup>800</sup> Wallis 2003, 17.

<sup>801</sup> Ruotsala 1998, 95.

<sup>802</sup> Magga 2007a, 14.

<sup>803</sup> Jones 2010, 199.

activities.<sup>804</sup> In the protection of sacred places, it has been viewed as important that locals have a right to use the sacred place. For example, in the Kakadu National Park in Australia, the traditional owners of the rock paintings are granted the right to rework these paintings.<sup>805</sup> When the varying meanings of sacred places are taken into consideration, it might be worth discussing also the right of people other than traditional owners to use the sacred places.

Sámi sacred places have had a long life cycle. At the latest from the 11th century up to today, people have had an impact on sacred places, but also sacred places have had an impact on people. Through human action, sacred places have been bestowed with various meanings that have left behind different material traces. All these traces from fish and reindeer bones to coins and quartzite chunks are tied together as parts of the life cycle of a sacred place.

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<sup>804</sup> Cf. Byrne 2009, 68. On critique against the preservation ethos, see also e.g. Melotti 2007.

<sup>805</sup> Mercer 1995, 136.